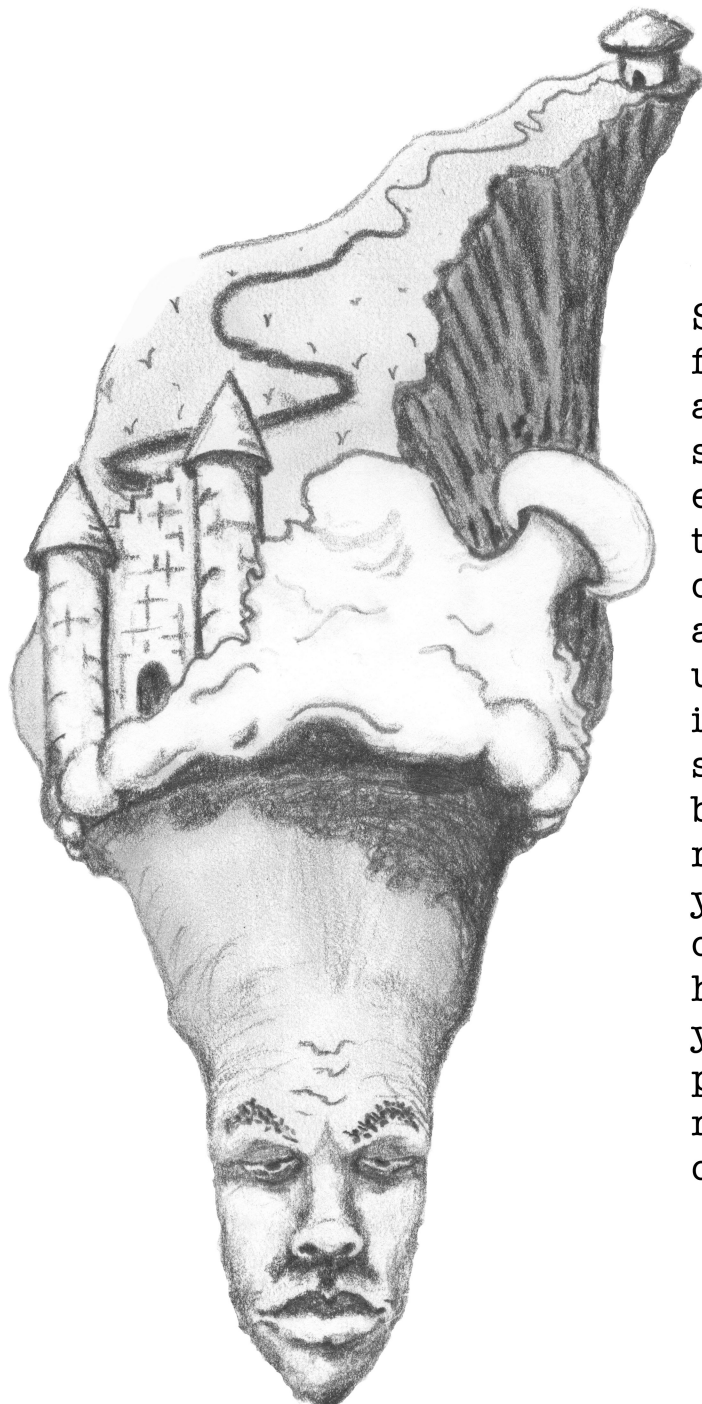


ART. Art is everywhere and influences our lives in ways we don't even realize. We create it and in some ways it creates us. For me, I am not an artist but one that enjoys an occasional scribble with a pen or pencil. All it takes is a little bit of focus and time before the blank page is gradually transformed into something never before seen. Sometimes it is hard to fathom what has just happened. Something from my imagination has manifested itself on the page and I, the creator, cannot help but to laugh at my godlike qualities. It is a strange phenomenon, the ability to create something from nothing. First, to think it and then make it become a reality. This kind of power is distinctly human and we are constantly using it.



We may think of art as something hiding away in a gallery, elaborate paintings that stand behind glass, alone on a wall. These forms of art can and do inspire people, move people... they also make us take a deeper look at what is humanly possible. But art is all around us, even in the day-to-day things we do. Any actions that involve creativity and imagination have artistic qualities. When we start to notice these things we see that art actually reflects and defines our culture:

- The music you listen to can not only change your mood in an instant, it also helps define you as a person...
- The things you write show the intricacies of your thoughts...
- Movies are a form of art that expose culture and can even influence how we act...
- Photography takes us places we have never been...
- The aesthetics of this world draw us closer as the ugliness pushes us away.
- Art also defines our economy through company logos...
- Billboards and advertisements have it to suggest what kind of products we should buy, where to go or what we should believe...
- Even our nation and beliefs are represented in artistic symbols such as the American flag or forms of religious symbolism...



So, our artistic creations comfort us and tell us we're not alone in the world. Art can show the harsh reality of life or entertain the playful imagination within us. And, like any other human expression, it can also be pretentious and manipulative. Genuine or not, it is important to be aware and respect the power of art. Simply because it's there, all the time, right in front of you... guiding you to your next destination, or defining who you are and how you feel. Believe in art and you will not only have the power to create it, but perhaps more importantly, the power to control how it affects you.